

The Memphis Manifesto: Building a Community of Ideas

Preamble:

Creativity is fundamental to being human and is a critical resource to individual, community and economic life. Creative communities are vibrant, humanizing places, nurturing personal growth, sparking cultural and technological breakthroughs, producing jobs and wealth, and accepting a variety of life styles and culture.

The Creative 100 are committed to the growth, prosperity and excellence of communities, and all who live and work there.

The Creative 100 believe in the vision and the opportunities of a future driven by the power of ideas. Ideas are the growth engines of tomorrow, so the nurturing of the communities where ideas can flourish is the key to success. Ideas take root where creativity is cultivated and creativity thrives where communities are committed to ideas.

Creativity resides in everyone everywhere so building a community of ideas means empowering all people with the ability to express and use the genius of their own creativity and bring it to bear as responsible citizens.

This manifesto is our call to action.

Principles:

The Creative 100 are dedicated to helping communities realize the full potential of creative ideas by encouraging these principles:

- 1) Cultivate and reward creativity. Everyone is part of the value chain of creativity. Creativity can happen at anytime, anywhere, and it's happening in your community right now. Pay attention.

- 2) Invest in the creative ecosystem. The creative ecosystem can include arts and culture, nightlife, the music scene, restaurants, artists and designers, innovators, entrepreneurs, affordable spaces, lively neighborhoods, spirituality, education, density, public spaces and third places.
- 3) Embrace diversity. It gives birth to creativity, innovation and positive economic impact. People of different backgrounds and experiences contribute a diversity of ideas, expressions, talents and perspectives that enrich communities. This is how ideas flourish and build vital communities.
- 4) Nurture the creatives. Support the connectors. Collaborate to compete in a new way and get everyone in the game.
- 5) Value risk-taking. Convert a “no” climate into a “yes” climate. Invest in opportunity-making, not just problem-solving. Tap into the creative talent, technology and energy for your community. Challenge conventional wisdom.
- 6) Be authentic. Identify the value you add and focus on those assets where you can be unique. Dare to be different, not simply the look-alike of another community. Resist monoculture and homogeneity. Every community can be the right community.
- 7) Invest in and build on quality of place. While inherited features such as climate, natural resources and population are important, other critical features such as arts and culture, open and green spaces, vibrant downtowns, and centers of learning can be built and strengthened. This will make communities more competitive than ever because it will create more opportunities than ever for ideas to have an impact.
- 8) Remove barriers to creativity, such as mediocrity, intolerance, disconnectedness, sprawl, poverty, bad schools, exclusivity, and social and environmental degradation.
- 9) Take responsibility for change in your community. Improvise. Make things happen. Development is a “do it yourself” enterprise.
- 10) Ensure that every person, especially children, has the right to creativity. The highest quality lifelong education is critical to developing and retaining creative individuals as a resource for communities.

We accept the responsibility to be the stewards of creativity in our communities. We understand the ideas and principles in this document may be adapted to reflect our community's unique needs and assets.

The undersigned commit to our communities and each other that we will go back to our communities to infuse these ideas into our social lives and public policies and share the accomplishments with each other so that we all can move forward and succeed together in a more creative existence.

The Creative 100 and Memphis Host Creatives

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Steven Wolff (Fairfield, CT)

** The Memphis Manifesto Summit was the first gathering of the creative class and it was held in Memphis, Tennessee, April 30-May 2, 2003. The Creative 100 – selected from nominations from across North America – and their Memphis host creatives represented the creative class in all of its diversity and multiplicity. Coming from 48 cities in the United States, Canada and Puerto Rico, the Creative 100 wrote this manifesto for their own communities and for all communities seeking to compete in today's economy. The Summit was hosted by Richard Florida, author of Rise of the Creative Class and How It's Transforming Work, Leisure, Community and Everyday Life, and Carol Coletta, host and producer of the award-winning public radio interview program, Smart City. It was sponsored by Memphis Tomorrow, an organization of Memphis' largest corporations and foundations, and Mpack Memphis, an organization for young professionals.*

The Memphis Manifesto is the creation of the Creative 100 and their Memphis creative hosts, who were helped in their deliberations by national authorities:

- *Richard Florida, professor and author*
- *Carol Coletta, host and producer of "Smart City"*
- *Kip Bergstrom, executive director, Rhode Island Economic Policy Council*
- *Bill Bishop, writer on the Special Projects Team, Austin American-Statesman*
- *Karen Carrier, creator of original restaurant concepts, art happenings and food*
- *Joe Cortright, economist and author of "Economics of Being Different"*
- *Kristy Edmunds, executive/artistic director for the Portland Institute for Contemporary Art*
- *Radhika K. Fox, program associate at PolicyLink*
- *Adam Gordon, co-founder and editor-in-chief, The Next American City*
- *Colin Jackson, president and chief executive officer, Epcor Centre for the Performing Art*
- *Kilolo Luckett, director of marketing and public relations, Pittsburgh Filmmakers*
- *Andrew Medd, executive director, Canada25*
- *Seth Mnookin, senior writer, Newsweek*
- *Charles Shaw, editor-in-chief, Newtopia*
- *Walker Smith, president, Yankelovich Partners*
- *Mary Jo Waits, associate director, Morrison Institute for Public Policy, Arizona State University*
- *Mara Walker, vice-president of programs and services, Americans for the Arts*

The dialogue for the Memphis Manifesto was facilitated by the following:

Eddie Batey

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George Bullock

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The Memphis Manifesto was signed on behalf of Memphis sponsors by Blair Taylor, executive director of Memphis Tomorrow; and Doug Bacon, executive director of Mpack Memphis.